was crude it was still another step forward in making the new valley more livable.

The time of planting and harvesting in 1861 came and went and the snows of another winter fell on more than 50 families who comprised the Snake River settlements. Then as the summer of 1862 arrived there was sufficient community spirit between the two groups that the first meeting house in the area was constructed. It was built of logs with a dirt roof and floor and was erected in the upper settlement, or Mound City. It was completed in time for the July 24th celebration. As it was nearing completion, the Presiding Bishop of the valley, Joseph S. Murdock of Heber, appointed Sidney Harmon Epperson to be presiding elder of the upper settlement. The lower settlement of more than 20 families was designated as a teacher's district of the upper settlement.

Elder Epperson was sustained in a meeting on June 26, 1862. He chose as his counselors John Fausett and Samuel Thompson. His calling as presiding elder proved him to be a man of faith and courage. He felt the responsibility of leadership and strove for unity among his people.

Side by side he worked with them in grubbing willows and sage brush, breaking land and making irrigation ditches, constructing roads, digging dugways to the canyons for fire wood, blasting rock and bridging streams.

Pioneering for the early Snake Creek settlers was a full-time job, 24 hours every day. However, by 1866 the lives of the people were further complicated with Indian problems. Restless red-men resented the encroachment by white men on their favorite hunting and trapping grounds, and often threatened the security of the new settlers. So, early in 1866 plans were made to abandon the rambling settlements along Snake Creek.

The axiom that there is "strength in numbers" and the wisdom of compromise are probably the two most important factors underlying the establishment of Midway, the thriving community that grew out of the two Snake Creek settlements.

The Indian troubles of 1866 made the settlers and leaders aware that the sprawling Snake Creek settlements would be highly vulnerable to the type of attacks being used by the Indians.

So it was that the upper and lower settlements on Snake Creek were advised to come together as one community. Tradition has it, however, that a warm contest ensued as to which community should join which. Each saw the virtue of their own position and desired not to move. However, a compromise location was chosen half way between the two settlements, and the new site was called, appropriately enough, Midway.

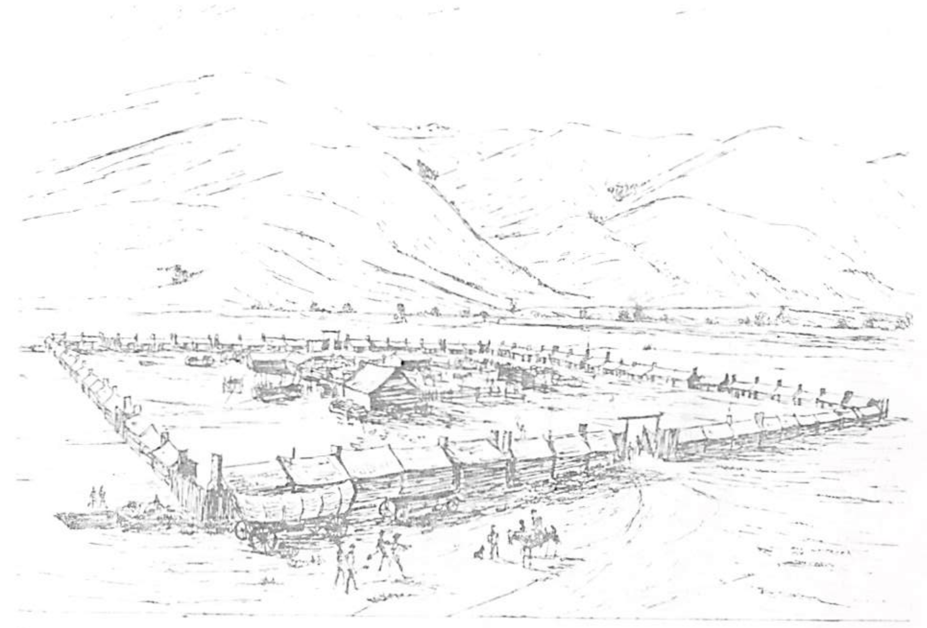
The first step in laying out the new settlement was a survey of the area. With Sidney H. Epperson and John Huber carrying the tapes and Mark Smith and Attewell Wootton Sr., the pegs, the city of Midway was soon laid out with a public square in the center and ample city blocks surrounding the square.

Then began the work of "forting in." Around the central square some 75 primitive dirt-roofed log cabins sprang into existence, some abutting against each other, while between others were erected strong panels of upright posts. In this manner an impregnable wall was formed around the square. Small windows were provided at strategic points to serve as portholes in case of attack. Life in the new fort-string was conducted under military law, with officers and picket patrols acting at the call of the bugler, John Watkins.

Fort Midway brought to the people a sense of well provided security, and by bringing them close together helped develop a new happiness and community spirit. Fortunately, the fort was never attacked, though the settlers were ready to defend their lives and homes at any time. The fact that the fort was not molested speaks highly of the ability of the pioneers to cooperate in community projects.

The first 75 families in the old fort and their locations are as follows:

From the southwest to the northwest corner: Sidney H. Epperson, Jeremiah Robey, J. A. Robey, Simon Higgenbotham, George Snyder, Thomas Ritter, Edwin Bronson, Samuel Thompson, Ira Jacobs, Washington Clift, Moroni Blood, John Huber, John Wintsch, George Dabling,



An artist's sketch by Bill Whitaker depicting the establishment of Fort Midway in 1866.

